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Week of 12.02.2017

House RESTORES Minnesota Mining

western caucus leads charge on bill's passage

On Thursday, November 30, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 3905, the "Minnesota's Economic Rights in the Superior National Forest Act," on a close vote 216-204. The bill represents a simple fix to the past Administration's overreach, in which the government abruptly elected not to renew longstanding mining leases in Minnesota's Superior Forest. The vote was a reassertion of Congress' Article IV Constitutional powers entailing discretion over federal land, and was in keeping with two prior Congressional authorizations for mining in the same area as well as the repeated recommendation of the U.S. Forest Service that mining take place there.

Western Caucus members were instrumental in the victory. The bill's sponsor, Congressman Tom Emmer, is a valued member of the Caucus; further, Caucus Chairman Paul Gosar was chosen to testify in favor of the bill before the Rules Committee on Tuesday, November 28. There, he was successful in advocating that the bill receive a structured rule and be put before the House.

Chairman **Paul A. Gosar D.D.S. (AZ-04)**, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman **Rob Bishop (UT-01)**, Chief Forestry Officer **Bruce Westerman (AR-04)**, House Republican Conference Chair **Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-05)**, Western Caucus Members **Tom Emmer (MN-06)**, **Doug LaMalfa (CA-01)**, **Doug Lamborn (CO-05)**, and Congressman **Jason Lewis (MN-02)** issued statements following passage of H.R. 3905, some of which are below:

"Mining has been a way of life for Minnesota since the 1800s and is a crucial part of our state's economy. Unfortunately, this was not a shared interest with the Obama Administration," said **Congressman Emmer**. "In their waning days, the previous administration took unnecessary, politically motivated actions by refusing to renew mineral leases and starting the process to withdraw nearly a quarter million acres of federal land from development. By passing the MINER Act today, we are protecting more than 10,000 jobs, and billions of dollars in revenue and education funding while leaving an extensive process intact to protect and preserve the environment and our beloved Boundary Waters."

"I thank Rep. Emmer for his leadership on this issue and commitment to protecting the economic livelihoods of his constituents. This bill protects jobs for Minnesotans while facilitating future economic opportunities across the state through responsible, environmentally sound mineral development," **Congressman Bishop** said.

"17,000 jobs, \$3 billion for education, \$1.5 billion in annual wages, \$2.5 billion annually for our economy and a total of four billion tons of strategic-and-critical-mineral-containing ore – this is what is at risk if H.R. 3905 is not signed into law. Left unchallenged, the Obama Administration's arbitrary termination of two hardrock mineral leases and politicized mining withdrawal – coming only the day before President Obama left office – sets precedent for a sweeping executive power grab that threatens communities throughout the country," **Congressman Gosar** said. "Congress has already passed two separate laws authorizing mining in the Superior National Forest, and the 1986 Forest Service and 2004 Forest Plans both concluded that mining is 'a desired condition.' No one is proposing to mine in the 1.1 million acre Boundary Waters Wilderness Area, an area that already has significant buffers, and mining in the forest will occur only after job creators have gone through the full NEPA environmental process. All this bill does is secure the opportunity to present mining plans for an area *already authorized for mining* by Congress. The people of Minnesota should know they have a Representative who will fight for their livelihoods in Congressman Emmer."

"This is a win for Minnesota and for our country," said **Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers**. "Mining and developing our minerals here in the U.S. creates jobs and grows our economy. This legislation will continue to uphold our environmental laws, including complying with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), while ensuring that we are responsibly unleashing our natural resources. This legislation also lessens our reliance on foreign countries for natural resources, which in turn strengthens our national security by making the U.S. more self-sufficient. Thank you to Rep. Emmer for your dedication to serving the people of Minnesota and for putting for a bill that helps our economy and our national defense."

Background

On January 19th, 2017, the day before President Trump was sworn in, the previous administration published a 234,328-acre federal mineral withdrawal application in the Federal Register, to restrict for a 20-year moratorium, lands within the Superior National Forest in Northeast Minnesota.

This action immediately placed this vast area off limits to future mineral leasing, exploration and potential development for two years while the 20-year withdrawal is being considered. The total withdrawal application boundary spans approximately 425,000 acres, including 95,000 acres of state school trust fund lands.

In conjunction with this massive mineral withdrawal, the Obama Administration's Bureau of

Land Management inappropriately rejected Twin Metals Minnesota's application to renew two hardrock mineral leases in Minnesota's Superior National Forest – leases that were signed in 1966 and renewed without controversy in 1989 and 2004.

The MINER Act halts last-minute political mineral withdrawals by requiring Congressional approval for any future withdrawal actions in Minnesota, renews two mineral leases that were denied for political reasons under the same terms they were renewed twice previously and ensures any future mining projects in Minnesota National Forests will have to satisfy all existing environmental permitting requirements including NEPA.

To see all of the statements by Members, full legislative background and the list of third-party endorsements, see the Caucus press release [HERE](#).

EPA Slashes Hardrock Mining Regulation

existing regs are sufficient and extra are onerous, says pruitt

On Friday, December 1, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced that the Agency had completed its review of the Obama Administration's proposed financial responsibility requirements for certain hardrock mining facilities under CERCLA were unnecessary given that existing regulations and laws already addressed risks sufficiently.

"After careful analysis of public comments, the statutory authority, and the record for this rulemaking, EPA is confident that modern industry practices, along with existing state and federal requirements address risks from operating hardrock mining facilities," said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. "Additional financial assurance requirements are unnecessary and would impose an undue burden on this important sector of the American economy and rural America, where most of these mining jobs are based."

The full EPA press release can be found [HERE](#).

Congressional leadership welcomed Pruitt's announcement:

"This is just good policy. States already have innovative, robust regulations to ensure the highest level of environmental protection and reclamation. I commend the EPA for recognizing that mining is vital to rural economies and altering course on this devastating policy. We are already too reliant on foreign nations for minerals that are buried in our backyard. It's about time we

incentivize self-sufficiency and acknowledge existing rigorous federal and state environmental laws,” said House Natural Resources Chairman **Rob Bishop** in a [statement released today](#).

“Imposing billions of dollars in new financial costs on job creators in rural communities in order to enact duplicative government mandates defies commonsense,” Western Caucus Chairman **Paul Gosar** stated. “The Obama CERCLA rule was a solution in search of a problem. I am grateful that Administrator Pruitt and the Trump Administration have heeded our call to scrap this fundamentally flawed, duplicative and unnecessary rule that usurps states’ rights.”

The EPA announcement comes on the heels of a Western Caucus-led letter, signed by 42 Members of Congress, calling for the Administration to scrap the misguided new regulation. Read the press release issued when that letter was sent this summer [HERE](#).

Growing Calls for Reform at Interior

natural resources chairman bishop pens op-ed in support of department 'transformation'

On Wednesday, November 29, House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop penned an op-ed in the Washington Times calling for a transformation of the U.S. Department of the Interior - from the bloated, bureaucratic sludge-machine at present to a Department positioned to nimbly and effectively execute its many missions, including managing nearly one-fifth the land in the United States as well as the development of our nation's bounty of natural resources.

Chairman Bishop's calls echo those of other federal land and natural resource officials, including Interior's own Secretary Ryan Zinke. While some of what Bishop has called for in a full-scale 'transformation' can be achieved internal to the Department at the discretion of the President and Secretary, more sweeping change to procedures are likely to come via Congressional authorization and subsequent new authorities.

Selections of that op-ed can be found below. Click [HERE](#) to read its entirety.

“The Interior Department is one of the most vital federal agencies, overseeing more than 400 million acres of federally owned land, 26 percent of which is in 11 western states. In case you’re wondering, 400 million acres is about one-fifth of all the land in the United States or approximately four times the size of California. The department and its agencies have diverse missions and responsibilities that include everything from running our nation’s cherished national parks to managing offshore energy resources on 1.7 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf.

Despite the importance of the department’s work, its ever-expanding missions have fueled a decline in its ability to provide efficient, effective and transparent service to the American public. In fact, the Government Accountability Office identified several “mission critical” functions within the department — the management of oil and gas resources and Interior programs that serve tribes — to be high-risk areas for ‘fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement or the need

[of] transformation."

I agree with the Government Accountability Office. The department has fallen behind in carrying out some of its basic statutory responsibilities, including responsible management and development of our nation's natural resources."

"A shift away from the current Washington-centric management system toward a contemporary decentralized model that prioritizes accountability, transparency and service to the American people must occur. A primary responsibility of Congress is to conduct oversight of the executive branch. The Natural Resources Committee has a critical role overseeing the Interior Department's reorganization efforts, and I look forward to reviewing the specifics of Mr. Zinke's plans. Together, we have an opportunity to not just move organizational boxes, but to transform the way the department responds to the American people it serves."

President Rumored to Announce Plans for Utah Monuments

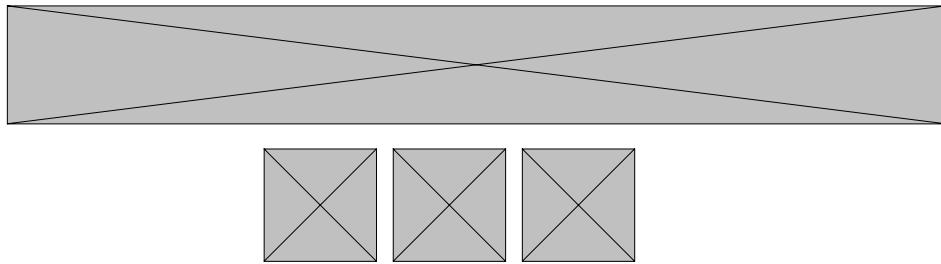
trump slated to arrive in salt lake city on monday, december 4

The media is abuzz with the news that President Trump will be paying a visit to Utah on Monday, December 4th at the invitation of Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and other officials.

The Presidential trip is being described by news sources as a means for Trump to announce his decision on the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante Monuments currently under his review. Some speculate - based on anonymous sources - that the President will also issue his decision for the remainder of the 27 total monuments under his review.

Congressman Greg Gianforte (MT-At Large) talks about his work with the Western Caucus and the House Natural Resources Committee to advance natural resource objectives for the

country and the people of Montana. He also discusses the pressing need for the Senate to pass Congressman Bruce Westerman's H.R. 2936, the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2017, so that it can be signed into law. Click [HERE](#) or on the picture below to watch the address.



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